UMT all out to promote squash

JEANNETTE GOON

UNIVERSITI Malaysia Terengganu hopes to host the World University Squash Championships in 2016.

Since the university was selected as the Focus Sports Centre (PST) for squash in 2010, the Higher Education Ministry has funded the construction of two squash courts at its Kuala Terengganu campus.

UMT vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aziz Deraman, said the varsity had requested for a further RM1mil from the Higher Education Ministry for two mobile squash courts.

"The university must do its part in promoting squash among university students. We plan to organise inter-varsity tournaments for students to show their potential and skills in the game" said Prof Aziz at a ceremony at the National Squash Centre in Bukit Jalil.

"We hope to produce squash players who are able to achieve the same level as Datuk Nicol Ann David. This way, squash will continue to be a sport that Malaysia can be proud of," he added.

Muhamad Syauti Abdul Rahim, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Maritime Technology and is a track and field athlete at the varsity, said fellow students have expressed interest in squash since they noticed the construction of the courts. "They want to learn how to play the game," he said.

Nicol, who has been named the squash icon for institutions of higher education in the country, was present to motivate the UMT students and athletes.

"Squash is a great sport for university students and funding is important," she said. She added that squash also involved non-physical skills such as time management, focus, prioritising and teamwork.

"These are skills that university students will need," she said.

The objective of the Higher Education Ministry's Centre of Excellence Programme is to develop sports in higher education institutes so that it can produce a generation of 'thinking athletes'.

The Ministry hopes that 30% of Malaysia's athletes will have tertiary education by 2015.

"We want to make squash one of our country's 'assets'.

"By starting now, we will be able to achieve our aim to create world-class players by 2016," said Higher Education Ministry deputy secretary-general (Management) Datuk Omar Abdul Rahman.

Also present at the event were UMT Sports and Recreation head Mohamad Rafee Jusoh, and Tony Azman from the ministry's sports division.

Nicol offering some pointers to the students at the centre.
Nicol holding a gift that was presented to her with (from left) Prof Aziz, Mohamad Rafee, Omar and Tony.